

RE: Opposition to HB 7192

To the Members of the Planning and Development Committee and Any Others Whom It May Concern:

As a US citizen, registered voter and parent of public school students in Darien, CT, I strongly oppose the provisions put forth in the Governor's Bill HB 7192 (including sections 7 through 10) and any other bills such as SB 874 (including sections 1 through 4) pertaining to regionalization that propose: i) creating a Commission for the purpose of studying the forced redistricting or consolidating of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut public school districts, iii) implementing forced regionalization or consolidation of school districts; or v) removing or limiting local control of school districts. The reasons for my position are set forth below.

o My family moved to our town for the schools. The quality of our school district is what keeps us here. The locally run public schools provide a nurturing environment where engagement is high, student learning is individualized, and achievement is encouraged.

o I have not seen any evidence indicating that regionalizing school districts will save enough money, given the costs of combining resources and added transportation costs. More importantly, I have not seen any evidence establishing that regionalization will maintain or improve the quality of education in any of the school districts. According to a report by Hanover Research in 2014 entitled Best Practices for School Improvement Planning, a comprehensive needs assessment of a failing school district is the first step that must be taken.

o A study conducted on K-12 Regionalization in CT of behalf of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving by Rodriguez Data Solutions LLC in May 2018 (see [Hartford\\_Foundation\\_K-12\\_Regionalization\\_Report\\_05-08-18.pdf](#)) concludes that:

- regionalization or consolidation does not necessarily result in lower costs in the short or long term, and it can increase costs and negatively affect academic outcomes
- Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford school districts had higher than average per pupil expenditures notwithstanding enrollment greater than 15,000 in 2015-16
- CT districts with 2500-3000 students had the best educational outcomes with per pupil expenditures that were at average or below average levels in 2015-16
- parental involvement results in better academic outcomes and parents are more engaged when schools are small

o I am worried that regionalization and the resulting the lack of, or reduction in, local control will result in: i) a decline in the quality of the education and academic outcomes; ii) lower academic scores; iii) longer transportation times for children resulting in decreased engagement, and increased absenteeism; iv) larger enrollment in schools; v) reduced teacher, student, and community engagement; and vi) a lack of accountability.

o Further, I am concerned that regionalization's erosion of the quality of the education in our local schools will adversely affect the CT economy and home prices. If new families stop

moving to CT towns because the quality of the education in the public schools has deteriorated, new businesses will not be attracted to our towns either. Moreover, existing families and businesses will leave at a greater rate than they are leaving now. This will worsen the state's fiscal crisis.

Smaller districts should be encouraged to consolidate, their state aid could be reduced in a series of cuts, like ours was, but the choice should still remain at the local level.

I also fear that if regionalization is forced on even the smallest of districts, it will be just a matter of time before the bar is moved to include larger and larger districts.

Please oppose HB 7192 and any other bills that propose: i) creating a Commission for the purpose of studying the forced redistricting or consolidating of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut public school districts, iii) implementing forced regionalization or consolidation of school districts; or iv) removing or limiting local control of school districts.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Michael Savino  
Darien, CT